

## Highwood's annual stinky festival to feature garlic gurus

By SHERYL DEVORE  
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A chef whips up something tasty at one of Highwood's annual Garlic Festivals. (Celebrate Highwood)

Highwood's annual Garlic Fest took a hiatus last year, but it's back this August and two garlic gurus will join the frivolity, said David Beresid, vice president of Celebrate Highwood.

"Henry and Janet Pieracci of Highland Park have been growing pounds and pounds of garlic for years," said Beresid, who's in charge of the festival. "They stuff garlic, fry garlic and bake garlic."

They'll be at the fest from 4:30 to 9:30 p.m. Aug. 18 doling out cooking and growing advice, while Beresid will spew out fun garlic trivia. Beresid has been known to grow a mean garlic bulb or two himself, and will regale participants with answers to age-old questions such as "Does the odoriferous bulb really ward off vampires?" Festival attendees can sample taste and purchase small bites or big bites of beverages and foods made with garlic.

Seating and tables are available. Patrons also can bring their own blankets and chairs. The event will be held in the newly renovated Evert Park, which opened in August and includes a permanent stage and band shell.

"Garlic Fest will be one of the big events right after the opening of the park," said Ilyse Strongin, a partner at Ripple Public Relations, which promotes the festival and other Celebrate Highwood events.



Garlic takes center stage at Highwood's annual festival.  
(Celebrate Highwood)

Strongin said Garlic Fest, not held last summer due to COVID, was created because the city is a culinary destination. “We have such diversity here — Italians, Mexicans, people from Latin America, South America, Cuba, China, the list goes on, and it seems garlic is an ingredient used in many of their foods,” she said.

When it comes to the festival, though, think beyond basic garlic bread and pasta. Although the fest features traditional sauces and butters made with garlic, it also offers tastes of garlic made in unique ways — for example, in cocktails, in ice cream and in baked goods.

“We have had garlic-infused chocolate chip cookies,” Strongin said. “We’ve had garlic martinis and garlic funnel cakes. We give people the opportunity to see why Highwood stinks and taste all different garlic options.”

The samples, some free and others at varying costs, can be enjoyed while listening to Bill Pantle, who performs a tribute to Frank Sinatra from 6 to 9 p.m.

Garlic Fest is including small bites for the first time this year to give folks a chance to try more garlicky pleasures. It gives them more options when voting for the people’s choice best sweet and best savory taste of garlic, Strongin said. Judges’ choice awards, with votes by the garlic gurus and others, also will be given.

In 2019, the first place savory judges’ choice winner was a Brazilian-style grilled cheese on a stick served with a garlic mojo or drizzled with black rum maple syrup or hot pepper jelly. A garlic funnel cake won first place in the judges’ choice awards in the sweet category. The people’s choice first place savory award was bestowed to a garlic Greek chicken dish layered in a bed of spinach, and Charlotte’s candied bacon took the lead for best sweet garlic treat.

This year, Celebrate Highwood is also gathering garlic recipes from the vendors and will pass them out to attendees.

At the fest, patrons can purchase fresh garlic as well as sauces, butters, jams and cookies made with garlic. Beresid said attendees also can purchase garlic scapes, the young, soft stem and unopened flower that curls up from hard-necked garlic. “They are delicious to eat sautéed in oil and have a mild garlic flavor,” Beresid said.

Strongin said she’s recently cooked garlic scapes in a roasted potato dish. “It was delicious, so flavorful,” she said.

Strongin said besides garlic being tasty, it also has been used medicinally.

“I think of it as nature’s antibiotic,” she said. “When I’m feeling down my uncle says to make garlic soup. Boil garlic and drink the water. It will help kick whatever (ailment you have) out of your system,” she said.

Perhaps Strongin will share that recipe at the Garlic Fest. Or not. But she does guarantee one thing: “Everyone will leave with stinky breath.”

**Garlic Fest**

**When:** 4:30-9:30 p.m. Aug. 18

**Where:** Everts Park, 111 North Ave., Highwood

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**Tickets:** Free

**Information:** 847-668-1213, [celebratehighwood.org](http://celebratehighwood.org)

*Sheryl DeVore is a freelance reporter for the News-Sun.*